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But jazz today is all across the map, creating many stylistic paradigms for future exploration and expression.
Juan Rodriguez

Atom Egoyan's Remember stars Christopher Plummer, left, and Dean Norris. PHOTO: FESTIVAL DU NOUVEAU CINÉMA

IN WITH THE NEW

From Pacino to Wenders and far beyond, the 44th Festival du nouveau cinéma's lineup is a worldly cinephile's delight

T'CHA DUNLEVY
MONTREAL GAZETTE

New films by Wim Wenders, Atom Egoyan, Laurie Anderson and Al Pacino are on the menu for the 44th Festival du nouveau cinéma (FNC), taking place Oct. 7 to 18.

Once again, the event offers a veritable buffet for ravenous cinephiles eager to get a sneak peek at some of the most talked-about features of the year from around the world, as well as a grab bag of up-and-coming and cutting-edge talent.

The FNC opens with the previously announced Le tout nouveau testament, a wild comedy from Belgian auteur Jaco Van Dormael (Toto le héros), about a 10-year-old girl who is the daughter of God, little sister of Christ and lives in Belgium. The festival closes with Guy Maddin and Evan Johnson's The Forbidden Room, partly shot in Montreal, with appearances by Roy Dupuis, Karine Vanasse, Sophie Desmarais, Charlotte Rampling, Geraldine Chaplin and Mathieu Amalric.

Anderson's Heart of a Dog screens in competition. Dedicated to her late partner Lou Reed, the poetic ode to her canine is in the running for the FNC's Louve d'or alongside Quebec cinematographer/director André Turpin's experimental Endorphine, Pablo Larrain's El Club (Chile), Malgorzata Szumowska's Body (Poland) and Louis Garrel's Les deux amis, among others.

The Special Presentation section is simmering with hot tickets, including Wenders's Quebec-shot Every Thing Will Be Fine, starring James Franco, Charlotte Gainsbourg, Rachel McAdams and Marie-Josée Croze; Egoyan's Remember, starring Christopher Plummer; Jafar Panahi's Taxi, the latest "non-film" by the censored Iranian director; two by Pacino — the 2013 Oscar Wilde adaptation Salomé (co-starring the actor-director and Jessica Chastain) and the 2011 making-of documentary Wilde Salomé; Youth, Italian director Paolo Sorrentino's follow-up to the acclaimed La Grande Bellezza; Lenny Abrahamson's claustrophobic Irish-Canadian co-production Room, starring Brie Larson; Hsiao-Hsien Hou's martial-arts period piece The Assassin (Taiwan); Bruce McDonald's Hellions; Jia Zhangke's Mountains May Depart (China); and Joachim Trier's Louder Than Bombs (Norway).

Jafar Panahi's Taxi is the latest "non-film" by the censored Iranian director.

Laurie Anderson's experimental Heart of a Dog, a poetic ode to her canine, is dedicated to her late partner, rocker Lou Reed.

The globe-trotting, indie-leaning Panorama section includes Lirio Ferreira's Blue Blood (Brazil); Florin Serban's Box (Romania); Yared Zeleke's Lamb (Ethiopia); Clara and Julia Kuperberg's This Is Orson Welles (France); Nikos Nikolopoulos and Vladimir Nikolouzos's Polk (Greece); Carlos Machado Quintela's The Project of the Century (Cuba); and Jorge Ferrero's Violencia (Colombia-Mexico).

Quebec director Anne Émond's family drama Les êtres chers is one of the many Canadian films screening in the Focus section, along with Mina Shum's Ninth Floor, a documentary on the Sir George Williams anti-racism riot of 1969, and Andrew Cividino's Sleeping Giant, which was recently named best Canadian feature at the Toronto International Film Festival.

French provocateur Gaspar Noé's Love causes a stir wherever it goes, with its explicit 3D sex scenes. It premièred in the Midnight Screenings at the Cannes Film Festival and is the opening film of the edgy Temps Ø series, which also includes Takashi Miike's Yakuza Apocalypse and Sion Sono's The Whispering Star, both from Japan; the heavy metal documentary Wacken 3D: The Movie; and Colin Offland's documentary Dennis Rodman's Big Bang in Pyongyang, about the basketball rebel's 2014 trip to North Korea.

The FNC will hold tributes to photographer Robert Frank; filmmakers Manoel de Oliveira and Babak Ameur-Zaimeche; producer and Pacino collaborator Barry Navidi; actor Omar Sharif; North Korean cinema; the use of architecture in Croatian cinema; and the Winnipeg Film Group.

And director Jean-Marc Vallée will host a "commented screening" of a to-be-named film, Oct. 9 at 7 p.m. at Cinéma du Parc.

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AT A GLANCE

The Festival du nouveau cinéma runs from Oct. 7 to 18. For tickets, call 514-790-1111 or visit nouveaucinema.ca.

YOU

The case for a new golden age of jazz

These picks prove genre is not 'dead'

JUAN RODRIGUEZ

The notion (or cliché) that "jazz is dead" would be worthy of ridicule if it wasn't prevalent among some self-described specialist critics and know-nothings alike. The romantic image of jazz — as the black man's hallowed art, surviving racist environments — is fun when you're in an archival mood and can turn to giants like Charlie Parker and Duke Ellington, Miles Davis and Charles Mingus. But jazz today is all across the map, creating many stylistic paradigms for future exploration and expression. Here's a sampling of diverse sounds that make the case for a new golden age in jazz:

Pat Metheny, Gary Burton, Jan Garbarek, SWR Big Band and others, Hommage à Eberhard Weber (ECM): What a difference this music is from the usual "tribute" albums, which too often are a hodge-podge of styles. Heartfelt grandeur characterizes this recording, arguably one of the most ambitious (Jo, gargantuan) in modern jazz history. Yet, astonishingly, it's as intimate as a love poem — indeed, it is a love poem.

German bassist Weber, whose elongated, arched lines revolutionized jazz in the 1970s, suffered a stroke in 2007 and hasn't played since. To celebrate his 75th birthday at a concert last January, guitar hero Metheny assembled an all-star group of musicians (American and European) and composed the title tune (running over 31 minutes). Metheny — who accompanied Weber on two of his first three albums on the path-breaking ECM label — came up with the ingenious idea of choosing two video performances by Weber from the '80s, combining the "virtual" sound with the band onstage, with Weber's image screened above the musicians.

The result is no gimmick; the expansive sounds are gloriously organic, a floating musical seppelin. The microphone placements and volume settings are evidently crucial here; the layers of colour and lexture are crystal clear, and the sweeping lyricism can elicit tears.

This was the first time Metheny had written for a big band since high school, and Germany's leading SWR band proves a formidable ensemble. "The best part of all of this for me," writes Metheny in his revelatory liner notes, "was Eberhard's approval of the (title) piece.

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